The Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians[1]
St. Clement of Rome

Contents

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

THE first certain reference which is made by any early writer to this so-called Epistle of Clement is found in these words of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* iii. 38): «We must know that there is also a second Epistle of Clement. But we do not regard it as being equally notable with the former, since we know of none of the ancients that have made use of it.» Several critics in modern times have endeavoured to vindicate the authenticity of this epistle. But it is now generally regarded as one of the many writings which have been falsely ascribed to Clement. Besides the want of external evidence, indicated even by Eusebius in the above extract, the diversity of style clearly points to a different writer from that of the first epistle. A commonly accepted opinion among critics at the present day is, that this is not an epistle at all, but a fragment of one of the many homilies falsely ascribed to Clement. There can be no doubt, however, that in the catalogue of writings contained in the Alexandrian ms. it is both styled an epistle, and, as well as the other which accompanies it, is attributed to Clement. As the ms. is certainly not later than the fifth century, the opinion referred to must by that time have taken firm root in the church; but in the face of internal evidence, and in want of all earlier testimony, such a fact goes but a small way to establish its authenticity.

Chapter i. We ought to think highly of Christ

BRETHREN, it is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God,–as the Judge of the living and the dead. And it does not become us to think lightly of our salvation; for if we think little of Him, we shall also hope but to obtain little [from Him]. And those of us who hear carelessly of these things, as if they were of small importance, commit sin, not knowing whence we have been called, and by whom, and to what place, and how much Jesus Christ submitted to suffer for our sakes. What return, then, shall we make to Him? or what fruit that shall be worthy of that which He has given to us? For, indeed, how great are the benefits[2] which we owe to Him! He has graciously given us light; as a Father, He has called us sons; He has saved us when we were ready to perish. What praise, then, shall we give to Him, or what return shall we make for the things which we have received?[3] We were deficient[4] in understanding, worshipping stones and wood, and gold, and silver, and brass, the works of men's hands;[5] and our whole life was nothing else than death. Involved in blindness, and with such darkness[6] before our eyes, we have received sight, and through His will have laid aside that cloud by which we were enveloped. For He had compassion on us, and mercifully saved us, observing the many errors in which we were entangled, as well as the destruction to which we were exposed,[7] and that we had no hope of salvation except it came to us from Him. For He called us when we were not,[8] and willed that out of nothing we should attain a real existence.[9]

Chap. ii.–*The church, formerly barren, is now fruitful*.

«Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for she that is desolate hath many more children than she that hath an husband.»[10] In that He said, «Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not,» He referred to us, for our church was barren before that children were given to her. But when He said, «Cry out, thou that travailest not,» He means this, that we should sincerely offer up our prayers to God, and should not, like women in travail, show signs of weakness.[11] And in that He said, «For she that is desolate hath many more children than she that hath an husband,» [He means] that our people seemed to be outcast from God, but now, through believing, have become more numerous than those who are reckoned to possess God.[12] And another Scripture saith, «I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.»[13] This means that those who are perishing must be saved. For it is indeed a great and admirable thing to establish not the things which are standing, but those that are falling. Thus also did Christ desire to save the things which were

perishing,[14] and has saved many by coming and calling us when hastening to destruction.[15]

Chap. iii.–*The duty of confessing Christ*

Since, then, He has displayed so great mercy towards us, and especially in this respect, that we who are living should not offer sacrifices to gods that are dead, or pay them worship, but should attain through Him to the knowledge of the true Father, whereby shall we show that we do indeed know Him,[16] but by not denying Him through whom this knowledge has been attained? For He himself declares, «Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father.»[17] This, then, is our reward if we shall confess Him by whom we have been saved. But in what way shall we confess Him? By doing what He says, and not transgressing His commandments, and by honouring Him not with our lips only, but with all our heart and all our mind.[18] For He says in Isaiah, «This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.»[19]

Chapter iv. True confession of Christ

Let us, then, not only call Him Lord, for that will not save us. For He saith, «Not every one that saith to me. Lord, Lord, shall be saved, but he that worketh righteousness.»[20] Wherefore, brethren, let us confess Him by our works, by loving one another, by not committing adultery, or speaking evil of one another, or cherishing envy; but being continent, compassionate, and good. We ought also to sympathize with one another, and not be avaricious. By such works let us confess Him,[21] and not by those that are of an opposite kind. And it is not fitting that we should fear men, but rather God. For this reason, if we should do such [wicked] things, the Lord hath said, «Even though ye were gathered together to[22] me in my very bosom, yet if ye were not to keep my commandments, I would cast you off, and say unto you, Depart from me; I know you not whence ye are, ye workers of iniquity.»[23]

Chapter v. This world should be despised

Wherefore, brethren, leaving [willingly] our sojourn in this present world, let us do the will of Him that called us, and not fear to depart out of this world. For the Lord saith, «Ye shall be as lambs in the midst of wolves.»[24] And Peter answered and said unto Him,[25] «What, then, if the wolves shall tear in pieces the lambs?» Jesus said unto Peter, «The lambs have no cause after they are dead to fear[26] the wolves; and in like manner, fear not ye them that kill you, and can do nothing more unto you; but fear Him who, after you are dead, has power over both soul and body to cast them into hell-fire.»[27] And consider,[28] brethren, that the sojourning in the flesh in this world is but brief and transient, but the promise of Christ is great and wonderful, even the rest of the kingdom to come, and of life everlasting.[29] By what course of conduct, then, shall we attain these things, but by leading a holy and righteous life, and by deeming these worldly things as not belonging to us, and not fixing our desires upon them? For if we desire to possess them, we fall away from the path of righteousness.

Chapter vi. The present and future worlds are enemies to each other

Now the Lord declares, «No servant can serve two masters.»[30] If we desire, then, to serve both God and mammon, it will be unprofitable for us. «For what will it profit if a man gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?»[31] This world and the next are two enemies. The one urges[32] to adultery and corruption, avarice and deceit; the other bids farewell to these things. We cannot therefore be the friends of both; and it behoves us, by renouncing the one, to make sure[33] of the other. Let us reckon[34] that it is better to hate the things present, since they are trifling, and transient, and corruptible; and to love those [which are to come,] as being good and incorruptible. For if we do the will of Christ, we shall find rest; otherwise, nothing shall deliver us from eternal punishment, if we disobey His commandments. For thus also saith the Scripture in Ezekiel, «If Noah, Job, and Daniel should rise up, they should not deliver their children in captivity.»[35] Now, if men so eminently righteous are not able by their righteousness to deliver their children, how[36] can we hope to enter into the royal residence[37] of God unless we keep our baptism holy and undefiled? Or who shall be our advocate, unless we be found possessed of works of holiness and righteousness?

Chapter vii. We must strive in order to be crowned

Wherefore, then, my brethren, let us struggle with all earnestness, knowing that the contest is [in our case] close at hand, and that many undertake long voyages to strive for a corruptible reward;[38] yet all are not crowned, but those only that have laboured hard and striven gloriously. Let us therefore so strive, that we may all be crowned. Let us run the straight[39] course, even the race that is incorruptible; and let us in great numbers set out[40] for it, and strive that we may be crowned. And should we not all be able to obtain the crown, let us at least come near to it. We must remember[41] that he who strives in the corruptible contest, if he be found acting unfairly,[42] is taken away and scourged, and cast forth from the lists. What then think ye? If one does anything unseemly in the incorruptible contest, what shall *he* have to bear? For of those who do not preserve the seal[43] [unbroken], [the Scripture] saith, «Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a spectacle to all flesh.»[44]

Chapter viii. The necessity of repentance while we are on earth

As long, therefore, as we are upon earth, let us practise repentance, for we are as clay in the hand of the artificer. For as the potter, if he make a vessel, and it be distorted or broken in his hands, fashions it over again; but if he have before this cast it into the furnace of fire, can no longer find any help for it: so let us also, while we are in this world, repent with our whole heart of the evil deeds we have done in the flesh, that we may be saved by the Lord, while we have yet an opportunity of repentance. For after we have gone out of the world, no further power of confessing or repenting will there belong to us. Wherefore, brethren, by doing the will of the Father, and keeping the flesh holy, and observing the commandments of the Lord, we shall obtain eternal life. For the Lord saith in the Gospel, «If ye have not kept that which was small, who will commit to you the great? For I say unto you, that he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.»[45] This, then, is what He means: «Keep the flesh holy and the seal undefiled, that [46]ye may receive eternal life.»[47]

Chapter ix. We shall he judged in the flesh

And let no one of you say that this very flesh shall not be judged, nor rise again. Consider ye in what [state] ye were saved, in what ye received sight,[48] if not while ye were in this flesh. We must therefore preserve the flesh as the temple of God. For as ye were called in the flesh, ye shall also come [to be judged] in the flesh. As Christ[49] the Lord who saved us, though He was first a Spirit, became flesh, and thus called us, so shall we also receive the reward in this flesh. Let us therefore love one another, that we may all attain to the kingdom of God. While we have an opportunity of being healed, let us yield ourselves to God that healeth us, and give to Him a recompense. Of what sort? Repentance out of a sincere heart; for He knows all things beforehand, and is acquainted with what is in our hearts. Let us therefore give Him praise, not with the mouth only, but also with the heart, that He may accept us as sons. For the Lord has said, «Those are my brethren who do the will of my Father.»[50]

Chapter x. Vice is to be forsaken, and virtue followed

Wherefore, my brethren, let us do the will of the Father who called us, that we may live; and let us earnestly[51] follow after virtue, but forsake every wicked tendency[52] which would lead us into transgression; and flee from ungodliness, lest evils overtake us. For if we are diligent in doing good, peace will follow us. On this account, such men cannot find it [*i.e.* peace] as are[53] influenced by human terrors, and prefer rather present enjoyment to the promise which shall afterwards be fulfilled. For they know not what torment present enjoyment incurs, or what felicity is involved in the future promise. And if, indeed, they themselves only did such things, it would be [the more] tolerable; but now they persist in imbuing innocent souls with their pernicious doctrines, not knowing that they shall receive a double condemnation, both they and those that hear them.

Chapter xi. We ought to serve God, trusting in His promises

Let us therefore serve God with a pure heart, and we shall be righteous; but if we do not serve Him, because we believe not the promise of God, we shall be miserable. For the prophetic word also declares, «Wretched are those of a double mind, and who doubt in their heart, who say, All these things have we heard even in the times of our fathers; but though we have waited day by day, we have seen none of them [accomplished]. Ye fools! compare yourselves to a tree; take, for instance, the vine. First of all it sheds its leaves, then the bud appears; after that the sour grape, and then the fully-ripened fruit. So, likewise, my people have borne disturbances and afflictions, but afterwards shall they receive their good things.»[54] Wherefore, my brethren, let us not be of a double mind, but let us hope and endure, that we also may obtain the reward. For He is faithful who has promised that He will bestow on every one a reward according to his works. If, therefore, we shall do righteousness in the sight of God, we shall enter into His kingdom, and shall receive the promises, «which ear hath not heard, nor eye seen, neither have entered into the heart of man.»[55]

Chapter xii. We are constantly to look for the kingdom of God

Let us expect, therefore, hour by hour, the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of the appearing of God. For the Lord Himself, being asked by one when His kingdom would come, replied, «When two shall be one, and that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female.»[56] Now, two are one when we speak the truth one to another, and there is unfeignedly one soul in two bodies. And «that which is without as that which is within» meaneth this: He calls the soul «that which is within,» and the body «that which is without.» As, then, thy body is visible to sight, so also let thy soul be manifest by good works. And the male with the female, neither male nor female, this»[57] …

Примечания

[1] - No title, not even a letter, is preserved in the ms.

[2] - Literally, «holy things.»

[3] - Comp. Ps. cxvi. 12.

[4] - Literally, "lame."

[5] - Literally, «of men.»

[6] - Literally, «being full of such darkness in our sight.»

[7] - Literally, «having beheld in us much error and destruction.»

[8] - Comp. Hos. ii. 23; Rom. iv. 17, ix. 25.

[9] - Literally, «willed us from not being to be.»

[10] - Isa. liv. 1; Gal. iv. 27.

[11] - Some render, «should not cry out, like women in travail.» The text is doubtful.

[12] - It has been remarked that the writer here implies he was a Gentile.

[13] - Matt. ix. 13; Luke v. 32.

[14] - Comp. Matt. xviii. 11.

[15] - Literally, «already perishing.»

[16] - Literally, «what is the knowledge which is towards Him.»

[17] - Matt. x. 32.

[18] - Comp. Matt. xxii. 37.

[19] - Isa. xxix. 13.

[20] - Matt. vii. 21, loosely quoted.

[21] - Some read, "God."

[22] - Or, "with me."

[23] - The first part of this sentence is not found in Scripture; for the second, comp. Matt. vii. 23, Luke xiii. 27.

[24] - Matt. x. 16.

[25] - No such conversation is recorded in Scripture.

[26] - Or, «Let not the lambs fear.»

[27] - Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 4, 5.

[28] - Or, "know."

[29] - The text and translation are here doubtful.

[30] - Matt. vi. 24; Luke xvi. 13.

[31] - Matt. xvi. 26.

[32] - Literally, «speaks of.»

[33] - Or, "enjoy."

[34] - The ms. has, «we reckon.»

[35] - Ezek. xiv. 14, 20.

[36] - Literally, «with what confidence shall we.»

[37] - Wake translates «kingdom,» as if the reading had been βασιλείαν but the ms. has βασίλειον, "palace."

[38] - Literally, «that many set sail for corruptible contests,» referring probably to the concourse at the Isthmian games.

[39] - Or, «Let us place before us.»

[40] - Or, "set sail."

[41] - Literally, "know."

[42] - Literally, «if he be found corrupting.»

[43] - Baptism is probably meant.

[44] - Isa. lxvi. 24.

[45] - Comp. Luke xvi. 10–12.

[46] - MS. has «we,» which is corrected by all editors as above.

[47] - Some have thought this a quotation from an unknown apocryphal book, but it seems rather an explanation of the preceding words.

[48] - Literally, «looked up.»

[49] - The MS. has εἷς «one,» which Wake follows, but it seems clearly a mistake for ὡς.

[50] - Matt. xii. 50.

[51] - Literally, «rather.»

[52] - Literally, «malice, as it were, the precursor of our sins.» Some deem the text corrupt.

[53] - Literally, according to the ms., «it is not possible that a man should find it who are«–the passage being evidently corrupt.

[54] - The same words occur in Clement's first epistle, chap. xxiii.

[55] - 1Cor. ii. 9.

[56] - These words are quoted (Clem. Alex.) from the Gospel according to the Egyptians, no longer extant.

[57] - Thus ends the MS., but what followed will be found in Clem. Alex. as just cited.

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